



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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September 21, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM:

Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **BETA FOSTER CARE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT
REVIEW - A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Beta Foster Care (Beta or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Foster Family Agency service provider.

Background

DCFS contracts with Beta, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster parents for the supervision of children DCFS places in foster care. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Beta is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of five certified foster homes in which three DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Beta is located in the Fourth District.

DCFS pays Beta a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, Beta receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of

these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. DCFS paid Beta approximately \$100,000 during Fiscal Year 2008-09.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of our review was to determine whether Beta was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed Beta staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed several children and foster parents.

Results of Review

The two foster homes we visited were well maintained. The foster parent we interviewed indicated that the services she received from Beta met her expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Beta also ensured that children were visited the number of times required by the County contract and that the Agency's social workers developed Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) that addressed the identified needs of the children. In addition, the Agency social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by CDSS Title 22 regulations. Beta also ensured that staff working on the County contract possessed the education and work experience required by CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Beta needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 safety regulations and that foster parent certification files contain all the required information. The Agency also needs to ensure that children's annual dental examinations are conducted timely. We specifically noted the following:

- One (50%) of the two foster homes visited did not adequately secure kitchen knives. Our prior review also noted that Beta did not always ensure that foster homes adequately secured kitchen knives.
- One (50%) of the two foster homes certification files did not contain the required foster home annual re-certification. At the time of our review, the re-certification was 33 days past due.
- One (50%) of the two foster parent certification files reviewed did not contain a current CPR certificate. At the time of our review, the certificate had been expired for two months. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation of a current CPR certificate for the foster parent. Our prior review also noted that Beta did not always ensure that certification files contained current CPR certificates.

- One (33%) of the three children's annual dental examination was two years past due at the time of our review. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the child received a dental examination.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Beta on July 17, 2009. In their attached response, Beta management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations (Attachment I). We also notified DCFS of the results of our review. In their response (Attachment II), DCFS indicates they will follow up on our recommendations during their next monitoring review tentatively scheduled for March 2010.

We thank Beta for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:JET:DC:AA

Attachments

- c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Michael Estey, President, Board of Directors, Beta Foster Care FFA
Dina Barr, Regional Director, Beta Foster Care FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
BETA FOSTER CARE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2008-09**

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Beta Foster Care (Beta or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We visited two of the five Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Beta billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in December 2008 and January 2009 and interviewed one foster parent and three children placed in the two homes. The foster parent in one of the two homes was going to voluntarily decertify herself as soon as the two children in her home emancipated. As a result, she declined to be interviewed. However, we still performed a facility inspection of the home and interviewed the two children. In addition, we reviewed the case files for two foster parents and three children and we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parent we interviewed indicated that the services she received from the Agency met her expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Beta also ensured that children were visited the required number of times and that the Agency's social workers developed Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) that addressed the identified needs of the children.

Beta needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 safety regulations and that foster parent certification files contain all the required information. The Agency also needs to ensure that children's annual dental examinations are conducted timely. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitation/Foster Parent Certification

- One (50%) of the two foster homes visited did not adequately secure kitchen knives. Our prior review also noted that Beta did not always ensure that foster homes adequately secured kitchen knives.
- One (50%) of the two foster homes certification files did not contain the required foster home annual re-certification. At the time of our review, the re-certification was 33 days past due.

- One (50%) of the two foster parent certification files reviewed did not contain a current CPR certificate. At the time of our review, the certificate had been expired for two months. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation of a current CPR certificate for the foster parent. Our prior review also noted that Beta did not always ensure that certification files contained current CPR certificates.

Medical Services

- One (33%) of the three children's annual dental examination was two years past due at the time of our review. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the child received a dental examination.

Recommendations

Beta management ensure:

1. **Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**
2. **Foster parents adequately secure kitchen knives and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.**
3. **Annual re-certification of foster homes are conducted.**
4. **Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including current CPR certificates.**
5. **Children's annual dental examinations are conducted timely.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Beta billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed three children placed in two Beta certified foster homes and one foster parent to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS. The foster parent in one of the two homes was going to voluntarily decertify herself as soon as the two children in her home emancipated. As a result, she declined to be interviewed.

Results

The foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parent indicated that the services she received from the Agency met her expectations.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Determine whether Beta social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Beta's administrator and supervising social worker and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers.

Results

Beta's two social workers carried an average caseload of 12 cases (including Orange County placements) and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised two social workers and carried four cases.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Beta staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Beta's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Beta's supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, Beta conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

None.

PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP**Objective**

Determine the status of the recommendations reported in the Auditor-Controller's prior monitoring review.

Verification

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2006-07 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on December 17, 2007.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained six recommendations. The Agency fully implemented two recommendations and partially implemented another recommendation. The findings related to recommendations 1, 2 and 3 contained in this report were also noted in the prior year monitoring review.

Recommendation

6. Beta management implement the three outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2006-07 monitoring report.



**BETA
FOSTER
CARE**

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
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REGIONAL DIRECTOR
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July 29, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
Wendy L. Watanabe, Auditor-Controller

FROM: Dina M. Barr, M.A., MFT
Regional Director

SUBJECT: BETA FOSTER CARE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT
REVIEW – RESPONSE

I would like to personally thank the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services' Auditor-Controller Department for reviewing our foster family agency, thereby providing us with the opportunity to improve our agency's services to our foster families and foster children. Our review was conducted by Cassandra Youngblood and I would like to commend her for always being professional and courteous in her dealings with our staff, our foster families, and our foster children.

The following is Beta Foster Care's response to the findings and recommendations made by the Auditor-Controller Department during their contract compliance review.

Recommendation	Response
1. Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDDS Title 22 regulations.	1. Beta Foster Care will provide training for all staff members regarding the foster home standards required by the County contract and CDDS Title 22 regulations. Beta Foster Care will instruct staff members to do periodic checks for compliance during regularly scheduled home visits.
2. Ensure foster parents adequately secure	2. Please see Response #1.

Recommendation	Response
kitchen knives and other items that could pose a safety hazard to children.	
3. Ensure that annual recertification of foster homes are conducted.	3. Beta Foster Care will implement new internal standards regarding annual recertification of foster homes to ensure that they are done within 1 year of previous annual recertification date.
4. Ensure that foster parent certification files contain all the required information including current CPR certificates.	4. Beta Foster Care will implement new internal standards regarding foster parent certification file audits. Beta Foster Care will implement a new standard that requires respite care or removal of child if certificates are more than 30 days late.
5. Ensure that children's annual dental examinations are conducted timely.	5. Beta Foster Care will provide training for all social work staff regarding the importance of annual dental examinations and various methods to obtain children's (even if the foster child is an adult) compliance with this requirement.
6. Beta management implement the three outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2006-2007 monitoring report.	6. Please see Responses #1-3 for a Plan of Correction regarding outstanding recommendations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to improve our foster family agency's services to our foster families and foster children.

Sincerely,

Dina M. Barr, MA, MFT

Dina M. Barr, M.A., MFT
Regional Director



PATRICIA S. PLOEHN, LCSW
Director


**County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
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August 18, 2009

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Fifth District

TO: Aggie Alonso, Chief Accountant-Auditor
Countywide Contract Monitoring Division

FROM: 
Elizabeth A. Howard, Section Head
Out of Home Care Management Division
Foster Family Agency/Group Home Performance Management

**DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF BETA
FOSTER FAMILY AND ADOPTION AGENCY**

The Out of Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) has reviewed the Auditor-Controller's (A-C) July 31, 2009 final draft audit report of the contract compliance review of FFA. Although, the report notes several programmatic issues, there were no safety issues which required an immediate response from DCFS.

We will follow-up on the A-C's recommendations, which is tentatively scheduled for March, 2010.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 626-569-6804.

MG:EAH:EK

c: Wendy L. Watanabe, Auditor-Controller
Patricia Ploehn, Deputy Director, DCFS
Lisa Perrish, Deputy Director, DCFS
Marilynne Garrison, Division Chief, DCFS

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"